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CULTURE CRINGE

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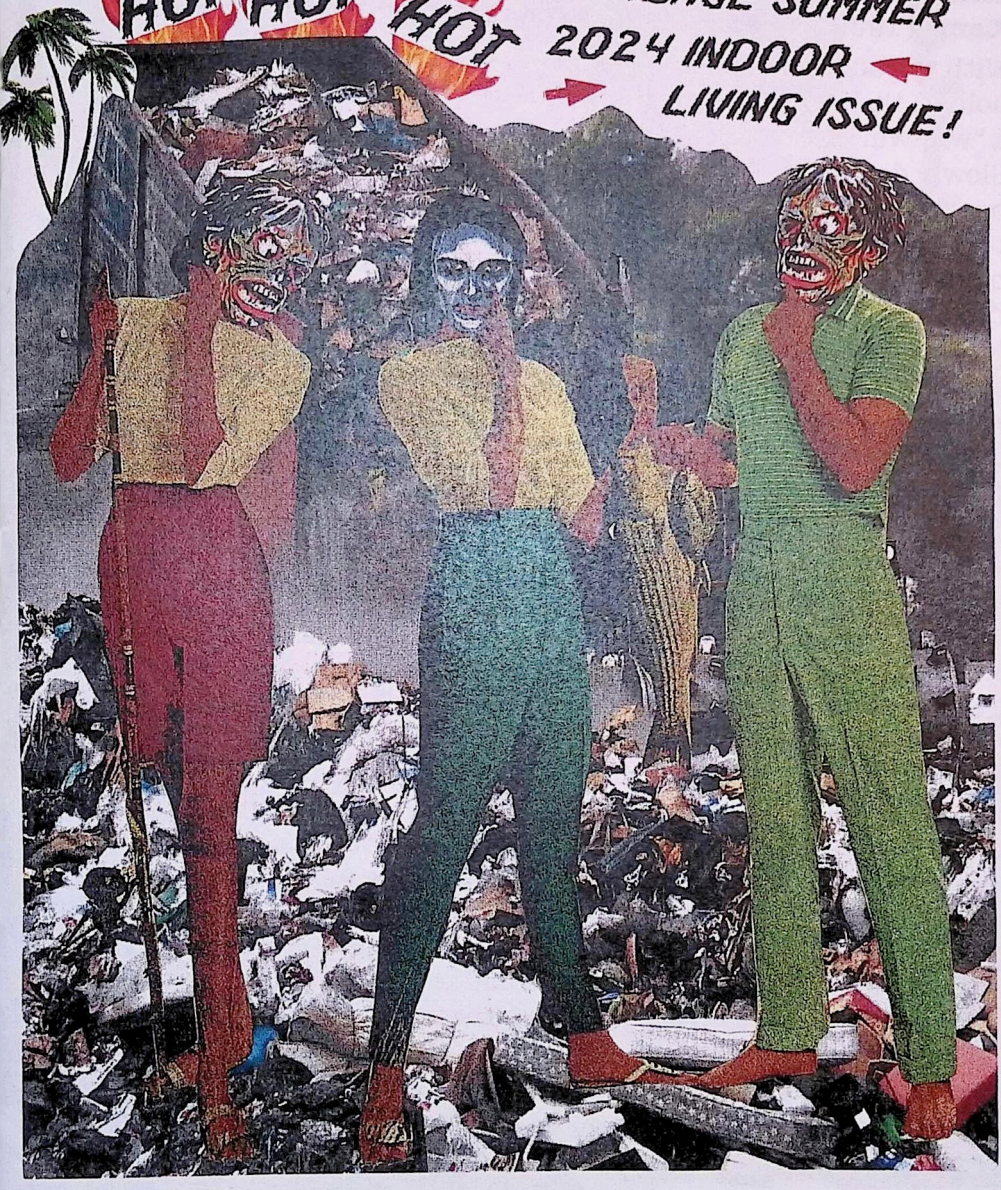
THE HOT HOT HOT

GARBAGE SUMMER 2024 INDOOR LIVING ISSUE!



The (late) Summer Edition

the following essay originally appeared in my private journal entry #867

As a journalist there is nothing more frustrating than when there is absolutely nothing going on in the world to write about. These are the times we live in un-fortunately so in order to fulfill my column in this (late) summer edition, I will first do a break-down of the absolute best natural disaster movies of the 1990s.

While natural disaster movies thrived in the 90s, it was certainly not a new concept. In 1936 Clark Gable and Spencer Tracy starred in **San Francisco**, a movie about the 1906 earthquake. Other early landmark films of the genre include **The Hurricane** (1937), **The Rains Came** (1939), **The Towering Inferno** (1974), and **Meteor** (1979).

With the advancement of special effects and early use of CGI technology, the genre was primed for a comeback in the 1990s. This was a "win-win" for blockbuster movie fans as well as the theater industry. Slowly declining box office sales sent film makers back to the drawing board for ways to get people in seats. In 1996, **Twister** was released to much fanfare and acclaim. The success of **Twister** spawned many copycat films, but more importantly it resurrected the natural disaster film genre for nearly 10 (ten) years. this fact is subject to change depending on who you ask

It is with this knowledge that that I propose to you, the reader, to strongly consider recognizing these films at your convenience. Many are easy to locate in the **VHS** and **LASERDISC** format for home viewing while it may also be possible to locate independent screenings at a movie house in your hometown. Armed with the knowledge of the history of natural disaster film thanks to this guide from **CULTURE CRINGE**, you will experience the works in a new light and could even experience great joy during the screening process. (snacks are optional)

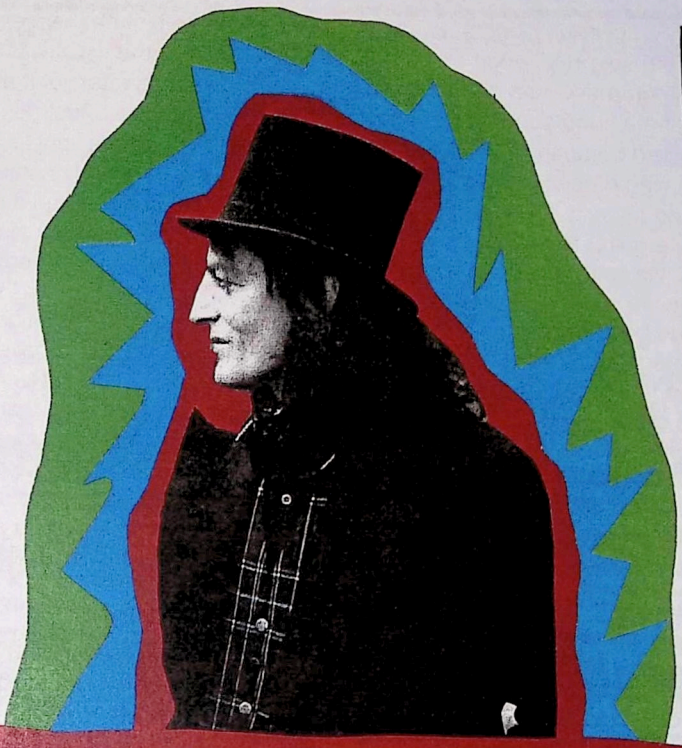
I will now present a list of media related to this dissertation. These works are in no particular order and please understand that while **Twister** is not listed here again, it should be noted that it is most definitely included - it was not reprinted in order to save ink and word processing time and materials related to printing the name of the film more than is necessary while maintaining the idea that it is included in the resulting list. Here now is the list: **Volcano** (1997) **Deep Impact** (1998) **Armageddon** (1998) **Dante's Peak** (1997) **Independence Day** (1996) and while it was not released until 2004, **The Day After Tomorrow** is absolutely worth mentioning. (the ending of that one is floppy)

In summery, films such as these could be beneficial in the release of adrenaline. That is a vital hormone that prepares the body to respond to stressful or dangerous situations. According to **THE BOOK OF THE CRINGE**, p. 1177 chapter 2 verse 5 you will read:

"adrenaline prepares the body to either confront a threat or flee from it"

Your Pal, Cringey

MARTIN NEWELL



Martin Newell wears many hats - musician, poet, author, psychedelic gardener - but he's best known as the force behind **THE CLEANERS FROM VENUS**. If you've never listened to the 'Cleaners, stop right now and seek it out. Come back when you're properly primed...I'll wait! Ok let's move on then. Interviewing Martin was an incredible opportunity and before proceeding I'd like plug their upcoming album - **Lilli Bolero**, which drops in late August. Also the new documentary about Martin, **The Jangling Man**, is available to stream currently. Alright - here we go!

CC: I know that The Cleaners From Venus have a new album coming out very soon! What is it like recording a Cleaners album these days - is the tracking process and equipment pretty much the same as it's always been? Are you still using a (Tascam) portastudio recorder?

MARTIN:

It's very similar to the method that I had when I had the Portastudio, it was the first one they ever made. I use a Tascam DP-03 SD. It's an 8-track, it was invented a few years ago. It's very good, it's got built-in reverb, it's quite a good quality reverb actually. You can make it sound convincingly like a very cheap version of Abbey Road, the Beatles if you wish to. But mostly I record on 8-track using pretty much 1967-68 production values, although I was only a boy, a very young teenager during that time. I noticed that where you've got to make bounce down decisions - you know I've only got 8 tracks - so what I'm doing is making my production decisions as I go along. I found out when I was in big posh studios, you'd put the drums across 16 tracks, then you'd have to make and do a sub-mix and all the rest of it. And it was just all too complicated. I wanted records to have the same values as those great records that I heard in the 60s when I was a kid that really lit me up.

Why didn't records sound like that anymore? I didn't want to imitate them exactly, I wanted them to sound as good and as exciting as that. So if the vocal was a bit too loud or the drums were a bit too echoey, so what? The foundation of it all of course is writing a good song in the first place. When I first took my first demos round to a record company in London at the tender age of 17, I was very lucky to meet a bloke who'd been in a band called the Four Pennies. I think his name was Fritz Fryer. And he said, "You're doing the right thing." Because I just had a guitar, I was playing a guitar to it. That wouldn't happen now, playing a guitar in a room to an A&R man. He said, "If a song is going to be any good, it will sound good with one voice and the instrument you wrote it on, like be it a piano or a guitar." So I've tried to simplify things because what's really happened is - technology has given us too much choice. It's made it too easy, it's given us too many choices. It's fun to have a bit of improvisation to just set your camp up somewhere in your living room. Record a guide guitar with a cheap old drum beat and build everything from there. And that's what I did with the original 'Cleaners. So the short answer is, yes, I'm using pretty much the same methods as I've always used. The gear is a little bit better. The DP03 is better than the original Tascam 144. But the Tascam 144 was a revolution. In theory, it gave me the same facilities as say, the Beatles might have had..but in a living room - it was a cheap. It was a dime store version, you might call it, but it got me started.

CC: You have written so many songs over the years - has there always been a particular writing method or order of operations that you use when crafting new songs, or do they come together in different ways?

MARTIN:
Basically I sit down with a guitar or a piano. You've got to be at the workstation at the right time. So just sit down, start playing a few chords on the piano or the guitar and some days there'll be a song in there and some days there'll just be a few chords. But if you're not at the workstation, there won't be anything. So that's all I do. And if I go, "hey, those chords are good, let's use them", I'll start to kind of make up a melody over it. A melody will usually suggest itself. There was a great - I think he was American - ice sculptor who very famous for doing..I think polar bears in Central Park or something. And somebody said to him, hey, how'd you get that block of ice to look like a polar bear like that? And he said, "I just, get the block of ice and I cut away everything that doesn't look like a polar bear." You know, like it's already in there. So I guess what I do with a song is I find out where the song is. It's already there. It exists somewhere in psychic space. It's my job to find it. I certainly believe in that story that Paul McCartney said where he woke up with pretty much the whole of the song "Yesterday" in his head and went around singing bits of it to people and said, "who wrote this?" And people were just kind of going, well, I don't know, YOU probably. Sometimes the song is already written. You've got to catch up with the future, not the past. I do believe there's a slightly psychic element to it. But being not too much for a fan of too much gobbledygook, I like to think that a lot of work is involved too. So you sit down and then I say to myself, what season are we in? What kind of mood are we in? Have we just been left by somebody who didn't understand us? Are we in winter? Is it a summer song? Have we just found someone and know the summer's just around the corner? All the usual stuff. Or am I cross about something, like the way a politician is performing at the moment? And these are the things that comprise my lyrics. And I'm also not scared of being silly, daffy, whimsical. There's a song on the new album called Bee in a Jar, and it's just about being in a good mood and dressing up. What shall I wear today? That sort of stuff. And so that's how I write songs. But there's one other method I use - I used to use when Lol Elliot was in the band. We would put down some bass and drums, then I'd arrange some guitars. Then I'd say, what can we put over this? And gradually the song would start to form. I know that some people write those sort of songs, but I don't think you can beat a song where you sat down on the guitar, worked it out, and sort of crafted it a bit. And being a grown-up more allegedly, I've also read quite a lot of poetry. I've noticed lyrics aren't as good as they used to be. The real masters, apart from the great pop groups of the 60s, your Brian

Wilsons, and all those guys. I mean, Steely Dan were pretty good...if a bit cryptic. But I think the REAL masters of songwriting, you'll find them in the Great American Songbook. You will find them in Noel Coward's songs, the Great English Master. They are stunningly good. Go back and listen to them. I don't care if your grandmother liked them or my grandmother liked them or my mother liked them. They're about rain drops and whiskers on kittens and all the rest of it. Sometimes they have real depth. If you listen to a musical called Carousel, there's a song on there called You'll Never Walk Alone. It is surely one of the most powerful songs that's ever been written. So I look for great songs. And they're not always American. Sometimes they've been written by French people. And English songwriters, of course, and Scottish songwriters. A song should be written. You can't just go and put down a drum beat and say, "I'm taking back my love" 60 times and then put some swirly sort of "someone murdering a hamster" type synthesizer sound on it and expect it to be a hit. Just because it is, doesn't mean it's a good song. That's it.

CC: Prior to recording new material, is the structure of each song set in stone? Do you ever have instances where your vision for a song totally changed and took on a new life once you started the recording process?

MARTIN:
Yeah, both really. I've compared it to..although I haven't got many children, I've compared it to having ambitions for a child. You learn you're going to have a child or you've got a child who's a baby. Yeah, when he or she grows up, they're going to be doing like that and they're going, "I bet it's just like his mother or I bet she's just like her father and I'm sure she's going to be a doctor and neuroscientist, a really good nurse, a pop star or whatever." In truth, you don't know how your song is going to turn out. You really don't know. And so you just have to go with what it does turn out like. Sometimes you might have a vision for a song, yes, of course, but the song might want to go its own way. You have to listen to a certain extent to what you've got and work it out from there is what I would say.
Yeah, I think that's about it.

CC: I have always been a huge fan of (and participant) of DIY creative culture and DIY distribution. Like, when I make these zines I just throw them out there into the void and hope that they might find a receptive audience. To me, The Cleaners From Venus are the ultimate DIY band. In the early cassette days, what was the distribution of your tapes like? Did you yourself go out and take them around to record shops?

MARTIN:
This is a very good question, Ben. "Did you yourself go out and take them around to record shops?" Well, actually, that's exactly what happened. It was very much like a scene because in those days, in the early days of DIY, and I'm talking about 81, 82, because I just was fed up with the record companies. And they had tied up all the distribution. So if I wanted to sell something in shops, literally I had to go into the shop myself with a handful of cassettes and say, will you put them up? And now I'd meet some, you know, sometimes unreceptive, smart, arse, specky guy, the kind of guy you get in record shops sometimes, just moody, so sick of people coming in, he'd rather just sit there and play the record to himself and be an expert on it. And they'd say, we'll take five of them. And you'd go in, you know, a week later and someone did buy one. I said, well, when you've sold a whole box, we'll come in and we'll get some money off you. But mostly what we did was we kind of gave the first ones out really. Lol (Elliot) wasn't used to the music industry. I was. I had a rough idea about work, but when I wrote to distributors, they weren't interested in taking cassettes. The internet did not exist then. If the internet had existed when I was a young guy with early Cleaners

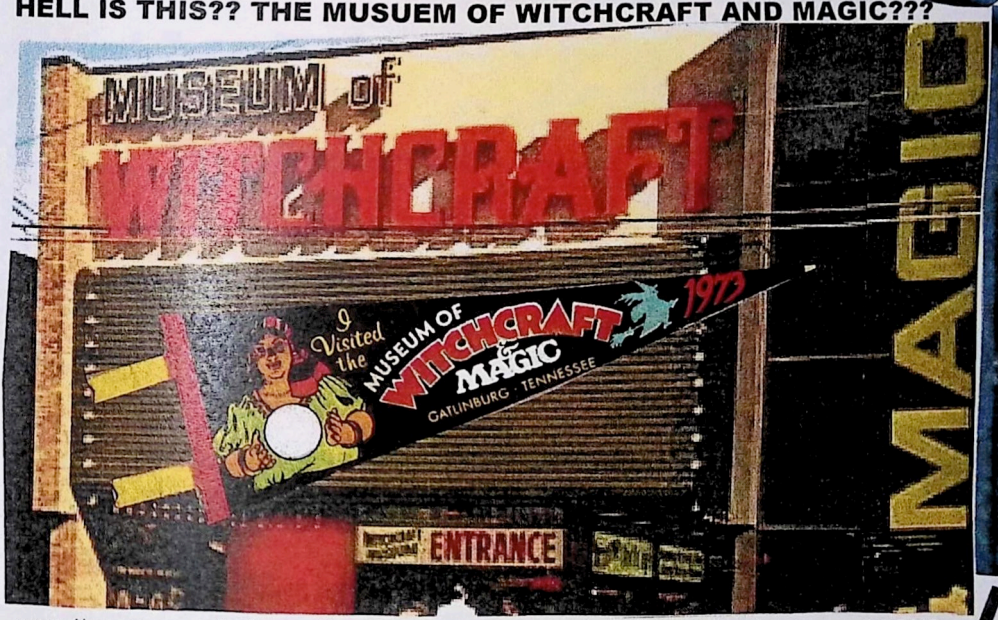
From Venus stuff, I could probably have gone out and taken on the world if I'd known how it worked. But it was tough. If we'd sold 50 cassettes, you know, over about a month, we thought we were doing well. And I'm amazed at those early cassettes. I think (the album) Midnight Cleaners was about the third one we did. It was amazing. I mean, people in America got them, and one or two people in Germany and somebody in Switzerland. And that was enough to keep the idea of it alive right until nearly 30 years later when I found to my astonishment that kids in California were listening to the old cassettes and furry old copies of them in their cars. In the early millennium, I was just staggered to find that anyone knew anything about them at all. I couldn't interest anybody in reviewing it in England. No one reviewed it in the music paper. We sent a few copies out, but people just thought I was mad. They thought I was just eccentric. I don't think anyone thought we were any good, but I believed in it. So I just carried on doing it. I thought, well, if only two people like it, that's still okay. I'm just going to carry on making music. It was like what I thought, and I've told this story before, is when you're a young guy, there's a number of reasons why you might want to get your music known. You might want to get well known because you were rubbish at sports, because you couldn't have a fight, because you were no good at passing your exams, and you thought at least I can be good at pop music. But then you find that people aren't interested in that either. And so you've got fame, and you've got money. You think, well, if I get well known as a pop star, I'll make some money, and then I won't have to do rubbish jobs. So those are the two princesses on the hill, fame and money. If you've got fame, you can tell your parents, everyone who put you down, all the people who bullied you, and the girls who chucked you for somebody more handsome or more debonair or something..you could get your revenge, basically. You could say, see, I told you I was good. You wouldn't believe me, and now I am. Now I'm famous, or now I'm rich. But in the end, those two princesses in those two castles are spoiled and capricious, and they might still throw you away just the same. In the end, I realized what I really liked was number three: the music. The music was the girl next door, who you'd always thought was quietly pretty, had always been just there for you. And that's the one you end up with, I don't care about fame or money, I'm just going to do music, because I love it and I want to do it the best I can. And that's what I did. The other stuff came very, very slowly afterwards, very, very gradually - once you stop wanting a thing like fame or money, it comes to you a little bit. But that's no longer important, because in the music industry, generally, it seems to be a place where the people who control it are looking for the LAST big thing, or an imitation of the last big thing, rather than wanting to invest money in the NEXT new thing. And I don't respect their judgment or their authority: they're just business twats to me. And I don't want their prizes, why would I want that? I can't acknowledge their judgment is very good, when I look at the rubbish that the music industry turns out. So I exist on my own, really. And if the outside world is beginning to recognize me, that's good, they can recognize me on my terms. No, I'm not going to get on their treadmill, or put on their uniform, or put on a bow tie and go "I'm so glad you gave me this prize." As far as I'm concerned, they can fuck off. And at the age I am now, what are they going to do? What can they do? Nothing. Except I've got better tunes than them. So that little bit of conceit will remain with me until the day I die and probably beyond. I intend to be a global embarrassment to the music industry for the rest of my life and after I'm dead. And that's the level of defiance you've got.

CONTINUED ON THE BACK PAGE!!

TRUE STORIES: from the vault

YES, GATLINBURG TN ONCE HAD A WITCHCRAFT MUSEUM

PICTURE YOURSELF IN THE EARLY 70s STUCK ON A lame FAMILY VACATION IN GATLINBURG. SO, A LOT IS AT PLAY HERE.. I WASN'T ALIVE THEN BUT I'VE HEARD THAT THE EARLY 70s WERE BONKERS AS FAR AS POP CULTURE GOES. THE POST VIETNAM HIPPIE MOVEMENT TURNED INTO THE JESUS FREAK ERA, MOVIES WERE GETTING INSANE (texas chainsaw, anyone?) AND PARENTS THOUGHT THAT ALL MUSIC WAS FROM THE DEVIL. tough time to be a teenager, but also an exciting time once you got away from the folks. OK OK SO BACK TO THE VACATION. YOU'RE WALKING DOWN THE TOURIST TRAP, boring boring boring WAIT WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?? THE MUSUEM OF WITCHCRAFT AND MAGIC???



yes, it was a real place. the museum was opened by Ripley's around 1972 and get this: it contained a ton of items from the estate of Gerald Gardner - legendary English Wiccan. Needless to say this place was EXTREMELY OUT OF PLACE in Gatlinburg. There isn't a whole lot of info available out there about it other than it only operated for three years or so before being forced out of business by local churches. It was then rebranded as THE WORLD OF THE UNEXPLAINED which featured Leonard Nimoy as the mascot/spokesperson. NOW. I remember as a kid going to that place and being totally freaked out by the wax sculpture of Mr. Nimoy that stood at the entrance. **And thus began my fear of wax humanoids.**

AND AS ALWAYS, THE FACTS HERE ARE GUARANTEED! STAY TUNED FOR MORE STORIES THAT ARE AND WILL REMAIN..

STRANGE.. BUT TRUE!!

Martin Newell interview. continued from page 6....

CC: I heard that you will be releasing a book in the near future called Home Recording Handbook. I was wondering if you could tell me just a little bit about it? Will it touch on any of your personal home recording techniques that you've used over the years?

MARTIN: Well, this book is called the Home Recording Handbook and it's based on an earlier book which I did write, which was all about home recording. But this one is not really a home recording handbook. It's a series of stories about the music industry. It will be of huge interest to people who like and love music. But its editor and publisher, who's also called Martin, has said we could put in bits about why don't you put in a few hints (about home recording). So I have. And I'm kind of getting bogged down in writing about how you get good sounds cheaply. So in a way, the Home Recording Handbook is turning into a home recording handbook. But I don't know how complete it's going to be. All I know is that it will be a good read because I've been writing for years and I've got quite slick at it. And it will be good fun. And I don't even think it'll be that expensive. It'll be called Home Recording Handbook and there'll be quite a lot of jokes in it.

Thank you Martin! This was the most fun interview I've ever had the pleasure of doing. I sent the questions to Mr. Newell and instead of just typing responses, he sent a 15 minute audio recording of his answers. How cool is that? Be sure to check out Cleaners from Venus!

THE HOT HOT HOT HOT HOT HOT 2024 SUMMER INDOOR LIVING GUIDE!

LETS GET RIGHT TO IT, SUMMER SUCKS. STAYING INDOORS IS KEY. HERE IS A CLINICALLY PROVEN LIST OF THINGS THAT WILL HELP YOU SURVIVE THE SUMMER AND KEEP YOUR STYLE.

1) WATCH VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE OF PEOPLE EXPLORING CAVES
2) LIVE STREAM ALL THE MUSIC FESTS INSTEAD OF GOING AND WASTING YOUR MONEY
3) POLISH ALL THE SILVER IN YOUR HOUSE, STARTING WITH YOUR DINNERWARE
4) ALPHABETIZE ALL OF YOUR BAND T-SHIRTS THEN FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, WASH THEM
5) MAKE A PARTY TAPE BY RECORDING FUN STUFF OFF T.V. ON YOUR VCR, TRADE WITH FRIENDS
6) PLAN A ROAD TRIP FOR THE FALL WHERE YOU VISIT EVERY DOLLAR GENERAL
7) WATCH EVERY EPISODE OF THE MONKEES ON DVD, THEN ENJOY THESE FREE PIN-UP PICS !!!

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